



White-naped Crane

Grus vipio

Range: White-naped cranes breed in northeastern Mongolia, northeastern China, and adjacent areas of southeastern Russia. Birds in the western portion of the breeding range migrate south through China, resting at areas on the Yellow River delta, and wintering at wetlands in the middle Yangtze River valley. They overwinter in areas such as the Demilitarized Zone between North and South Korea and the Japanese island of Kyushu where they rely heavily upon an artificial feeding station located outside the city of Izumi.

Habitat: They prefer shallow wetlands and wet meadows in broad river valleys, along lake edges, and in lowland steppes or mixed forest-steppe areas. The cranes nest, roost, and feed in shallow wetlands and along wetland edges, foraging in adjacent grasslands or farmlands. During migration and on their wintering grounds, they use rice paddies, mudflats, other wetlands, and agricultural fields.

Diet: All cranes are omnivorous. White-naped cranes feed on insects, small vertebrates, seeds, roots and tubers, wetlands plants, and waste grains.

Lifespan: In captivity, white-naped cranes can live into their 60's.

Description: White-naped cranes are the only crane species with pinkish legs and a dark gray and white striped neck. The white hind neck and nape surrounded by an extensively reddish face patch also serve to identify this species. Adult plumage is dark gray and wings and wing coverts are silvery gray. Males and females are virtually indistinguishable, although in breeding pairs males tend to be slightly larger in size than females. Adults average four feet in height and weigh about 12 lbs.

Breeding: Mated pairs of cranes, including white-naped cranes engage in unison calling, which is complex and extended series of coordinated calls. The birds stand in a specific posture, usually with their heads thrown back and beaks skyward during the display. The females initiate the display and utter two calls for each male call. The male always lifts up his wings over his back during the unison call while the female keeps her wings folded at her sides. Nests are mounds of dried sedges and grasses in open wetlands. Females usually lay two eggs and incubation (by both sexes) lasts 28-32 days. The male takes the primary role in defending the nest against possible danger. Chicks fledge at 70-75 days.

Behavior/Adaptations: White-naped cranes are often found in the company of other crane species that also occur within their range including red-crowned, hooded, demoiselle, and Eurasian cranes. All cranes engage in dancing, which includes various behaviors such as bowing, jumping, running, stick or grass tossing, and wing flapping. Dancing can occur at any age and is commonly associated with courtship, however, it is generally believed to be a normal part of motor development for cranes and can serve to thwart aggression, relieve tension, and strengthen the pair bond.

Predators: Humans, large carnivores

Conservation: Vulnerable due to habitat loss and degradation.

The Zoo's White-naped Cranes: Maris, our female crane, was born at the Oklahoma City Zoo on 6/11/1996 and Niles, our male crane, was born at the International Crane Foundation in Baraboo, WI on 5/17/1994.

Interesting Facts:

- Nape is another word for the back of the neck. The white-naped crane is named for the white stripe running down the back of its neck.
- White-naped cranes reach about 4 feet in height.

Information taken from the following sources:

<https://www.savingcranes.org/white-naped-crane.html>

<http://www.arkive.org/white-naped-crane/grus-vipio/>